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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT ALIYEV'S "GET-ACQUAINTED" MEETING WITH
FRENCH PRESIDENT SARKOZY

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Donald Lu per 1.4 (b,d).

11. (C) According to Presidential Foreign Policy Advisor Novruz Mammadov, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's November 19-20 visit to France was primarily an opportunity to "get acquainted" with new French President Nicholas Sarkozy. According to Mammadov, the presidents' meeting focused on regional issues (including Russia and Iran) and the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Mammadov said it was particularly important that Aliyev brief Sarkozy on Azerbaijan's perspective on the NK conflict, noting that France has a large and active Armenian population. Mammadov, who attended the presidential meeting, said he had the impression Sarkozy did not yet have a clear sense of the South Caucasus. Mammadov also commented that Sarkozy seemed extremely preoccupied during the 35-minute meeting, adding that Aliyev's visit took place during the French transport strike and that Sarkozy moved the meeting with Aliyev from its agreed morning time to an afternoon time, due to the press of internal affairs.

12. (C) French Charge d'Affaires Philippe Wieber separately confirmed that the primary purpose of Aliyev's visit to France was to get acquainted with Sarkozy. Wieber said that Sarkozy made just a few broad points, focused on the NK conflict and economic cooperation. Wieber said that Sarkozy may have made a passing reference to political reform issues, but this was not the primary focus of the meeting. Contrasting this visit to Aliyev's January 2007 state visit to France, Wieber said that the November visit was much more low-key and included only two official meetings: Sarkozy and Senate President Christian Ponselle. Wieber said that no agreements were signed during the visit. Baku-based Total officials confirmed press reports that Aliyev met with Total CEO Christophe de Margerie but said the meeting was not particularly substantive.

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